

*Washington Park Arboretum*

# BULLETIN



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### Washington Park Arboretum

The Arboretum is a 230-acre dynamic collection of trees, displaying internationally renowned collections of oaks, conifers, camellias, Japanese maples, hollies and a profusion of woody plants from the Pacific Northwest and around the world. Aesthetic enjoyment gracefully co-exists with science in this spectacular urban green space on the shores of Lake Washington. Visitors come to learn, explore, relax or reflect in Seattle's largest public garden.

The Washington Park Arboretum is managed cooperatively by the University of Washington and Seattle Parks and Recreation; the Arboretum Foundation is its major support organization.

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2300 Arboretum Drive East, Seattle, WA 98112

206-325-4510 voice / 206-325-8893 fax

[gvc@arboretumfoundation.org](mailto:gvc@arboretumfoundation.org)

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**ABOVE:** The perfect, white flowers of *Crataegus jackii* appear on this large, thorny shrub or small tree in May. Originally named for Quebec native John George Jack, who worked for many years at Boston's Arnold Arboretum, this hawthorn is native to southeastern Canada. In autumn, it is covered in dark red fruit. In the Washington Park Arboretum, its spring blossoms and fall fruit may be seen at grid coordinates 14-2W.

**ON THE COVER:** Even the sound of the water seems to be conveyed by this photograph of the waterfall in Washington Park Arboretum's Japanese Garden. For questions to ask yourself while taking a leisurely tour of the Japanese Garden, see page 16.

# Thank You!

For many of us, an early harbinger of spring is the Northwest Flower and Garden Show. This year's Arboretum Foundation garden, "Woodland Path as Poetry of Landscape," was designed by The Berger Partnership's Jan Satterthwaite and Jason Henry. A beautiful, walk-through garden, designed to recall the Arboretum's woodland paths and reflective nature, it was very popular with show visitors. In fact, the garden was awarded a gold medal for design as well as the American Horticulture Society's Environmental Award, presented to the garden best demonstrating both skillful design and environmental stewardship.

We are very proud of these awards. Many, many thanks to the designers, the volunteers and staff members of the Foundation, the City of Seattle Parks Department and the University of Washington Botanic Gardens/Washington Park Arboretum grounds crews for the numerous hours and considerable work spent making this garden a winner!

The Foundation's premiere fundraising event, the Preview Gala, is held in conjunction with the Flower Show the night before it opens to the public. Guests are treated to sumptuous food and wine, the opportunity to view show gardens at their freshest and the fun of bidding on exciting, silent-auction packages. We thank guests who attend faithfully each year and those who routinely introduce new friends to this special night and to the Arboretum.

As spring continues, the Foundation begins holding plant sales, among them, the

oldest and largest plant sale in the city, *FlorAbundance*. And this year, watch for something extra special on Mother's Day. When you visit the Arboretum, please stop by the Arboretum Shop, located at the Graham Visitors Center and celebrating its 20th anniversary this year with merchandise specials and the latest in books and gifts. Thanks to all who have made the shop such a remarkable success. All event information can be obtained at our Web site, [www.arboretumfoundation.org](http://www.arboretumfoundation.org), or by calling the Foundation office at 206-325-4510. ~



Deborah Andrews, Executive Director,  
Arboretum Foundation



"White Camellia," by Linda Hatcher of Auburn, Washington, was awarded first prize in the "Plant Portrait," professional division, of the Arboretum's 2004 photo contest.





**ABOVE BACKGROUND:** The pink flowers of this weeping Higan cherry (*Prunus subhirtella* 'Eureka Weeping') surround visitors with a curtain of color. These beautiful blooms may be seen in the Arboretum at grid locations 8-2W, 12-B, 18-1W, 20-1W and 38-B and elsewhere.

**INSET:** Lee Schiring's painting, "Sakura, Sakura," echoes the breathtaking froth of flowers and twisted trunk of the tree she saw in the Arboretum. In Japanese, "sakura" means flowering cherry tree. In Japan, flowering cherries have been cultivated for over a thousand years.

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## *Sakura, Sakura*

BY LEE SCHIRING

The two of you are going to the Japanese Garden. It is the first Sunday in April, and surely the cherry trees will be in bloom.

And indeed, as you drive down the winding boulevard, you catch sight of clouds of bloom up the bank in the Arboretum.

Should you stop?

But your minds are set: surely the Japanese Garden will be even more concentrated splendor—a magnificent outburst of spring.

Surprisingly, once through the Japanese Garden's massive wooden gate, spring is banished. The somber elegance of widely spaced shrubs, immaculate moss and tidily edged paths takes you backwards into the



simplicity of winter. Within these walls you find only quiet, clipped green and a few pure, perfect white camellias, set, like jewels, on pruned branches.

The wind is sharp, hurrying both of you along with a few other silent visitors—all keeping precisely to the paths. Even the koi move sluggishly in the pond.

Should you leave?

### The Leap

Back down the boulevard . . . From the parking lot below the bank where you first



caught sight of the cherries in bloom, you leap across the wide grass path—leap to avoid sinking in mud—laughing and giddy with escape from the rigors of chilly winter. And as you pick your way, you keep

glancing up and up the bank—into paradise.

The hillside bears tiers of pink and white, pure exuberance: tree after tree, cherries covered with clumps of bloom like hills crowned with snow; magnolias, thin silk and creamy satin, all set against a warming April sky, full of clouds, full of rain.

You have one camera between you, and you climb the steep bank, repeating the litany:

**ABOVE:** This Japanese flowering cherry or Oriental cherry, *Prunus serrulata* 'Shirotae' ('Mount Fuji'), has white flowers that open from rich pink buds. Dark, twisted trunks and red fall-leaf color make

Japanese flowering cherries interesting throughout the year. These cherries may be viewed at Arboretum grid locations 29-2W and 36-1W, in the Japanese Garden and in the Union Bay gardens.

**INSET:** Because it is so disease-resistant, *Prunus* 'Berry' (Cascade Snow™) is well suited to gardens west of the Cascade Mountains and is recommended to gardeners by the Great Plant Picks program.

Large, snow-white, spring blossoms are followed by dark green leaves that turn orange-bronze and yellow in fall. It may be seen in the Arboretum at grid coordinates 32-2W and 33-2W.

(For more about Great Plant Picks, see [www.greatplantpicks.org](http://www.greatplantpicks.org).)

"How pretty! How beautiful!" You point first to this—"There's a beauty! Can you take that one? And that? Look at the view, branches opening to the sky, framed in a cloud of pink." You feel whirled in color, as if caught in a kaleidoscope full of stars.

"Oh!" you both say, as one points the viewfinder upward again, and your heels start to take you backwards down the hill. You zig and zag up the hillside and finally reach a casual path—packed dirt, with no edging of precisely pruned shrubs. Up here, above the hillside, you are wrapped in the blossoming heads of trees.

Happily, you wander along this path cut into the bank, awash in foaming cherry blossom, as if in a bubble bath.

## The Tree

" . . . well, I don't really see that she can possibly have any . . . "

The voice swells, *mezzo forte*, as two girls move briskly down a crossing path. And the cherry blossoms are all clanging with conversation. You stop 'til they have gone on, 'til the swirl of pink and white quiets the woodland.

The view at the turn of the path is wonderful.

There is only one more picture on the roll.

But the view is so beautiful!

And you take the last picture.

Now two young men overtake you on the path: " . . . well, that was enough. I knew not to trust any more . . . "

No one here is silent.

"Loveliest of trees, the cherry now, is hung with bloom along the bough . . . " You try to remember A. E. Housman's poem. Snatches recur: " . . . about the woodland I must go, to see the cherry hung with snow . . . "

And then, there it is—The Tree: a twisted shaft of purest black; a crown of pink, frothing and foaming in a tilted mass, leaning almost to the ground. You stand and draw breath,

just letting the spaces sink in. And then, because the last picture has been taken, you pull out your pocket sketchbook and try to capture the twisting shapes.

You've caught the idea, but the pen lines are so thin. You promise yourself you'll try to remember.

And you do, later. There the painting hangs—imperfect—but giving, when you glance at it, some echo of what you saw when you first looked at the tree itself.

A side path leads back down to the other end of the squelchy mud and grass track, and you descend to make closer acquaintance with individual flowers on the tree. The middle of each flower is a star: the translucent petals overlap and produce a shadow star, supported by the split bud sheath.

All around this curve of open swath, and the bank of blooming trees, the myriad star shapes—the translucent petals—are catching the light, making a Milky Way of spring before you.

Here, you say, there should be Japanese dancers in scarlet kimonos, twirling oiled-paper umbrellas. In reality, there are monks in long, dark-red gowns, admiring the branches.

You squish towards the car—rain falling lightly now. You had forgotten all about lunch, and you are beginning to feel hungry.

A couple stops you on the path: "Can you tell us how to get to the Japanese Garden?"

"It's farther along the boulevard—but we have to tell you, there are no cherry blossoms there. They are all here."

And as you leave, you see the couple climbing into spring. ♡

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**LEE SCHIRING** is a musician, teacher and painter. She and her husband Ken are Arboretum Foundation members and love the Arboretum, including the Japanese Garden, in all seasons.







# Calcutta— A Horticultural Adventure

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BOB LILLY

In February 2005, I embarked upon an adventure that can only be called extraordinary! Alice Doyle, of Log House Plants in Eugene, Oregon, asked me to join her, Kees Sahin and Derry Watkins, from Special Plants near Bath, England, on a trip to Calcutta, India. For many years we had been pressured by Kees to accompany him to the Calcutta Flower Show, held at the Agri-Horticultural Society of India, which was established in 1820. As it turned out, this standard, amateur flower show had been running for 185 years, and even more surprising, all four of us ended up being judges!

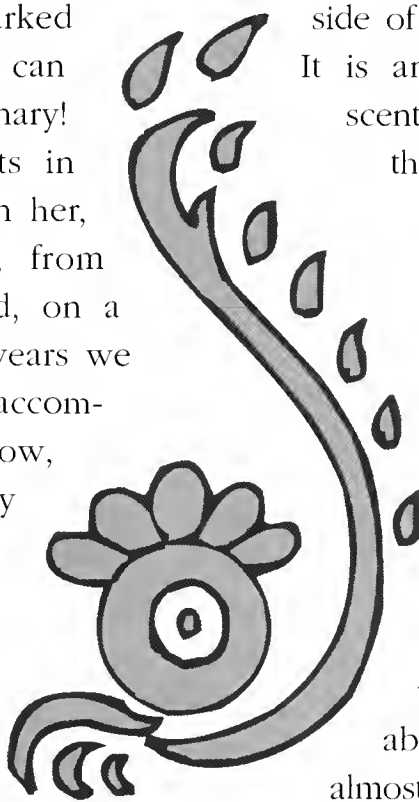
An afternoon flight from Bombay brought us to Calcutta late in the day, so it was followed by a taxi ride into town at dusk. There is little in this world as strange as a wild, Ambassador Cab ride into an immense city, engulfed in darkness and winter haze, with taxis, trucks, minivans, man-drawn rickshaws, carts pulled by most types of four-legged herbivores, and thousands of people everywhere. Several friends had told me Calcutta has a particular odor, and it does, but it is more the scent of presence—of dust, water vapor, coal smoke, diesel and car exhaust, and wood smoke. In some areas, the odor of hot tar—being heated for roadwork in big metal drums over wood fires by the

side of the street—is added to this mix. It is an unforgettable combination of scents, an almost touchable taste of the city.

Calcutta is a city of immense parks, canals and neighborhoods with complex street layouts or wide boulevards—some lined with large trees. It also has over ten million people, most of whom seem to be out in the streets and on the sidewalks at all times. In the Maidan, the main city park, we visited a book fair where stalls, about 20-by-20 feet square and almost as tall, were constructed with

doors, windows and shelves, and held, seemingly, millions of books. The fair covered about 45 of the park's acres, was in progress for a week and attracted 800,000 people. Yes, I found a couple of books to bring home.

Calcutta is a city of contrasts. The most apparent view of these differences encompasses the contrast between the lives of people who really do live on the streets, sleep in tents and cook on open fires, and our experience at a Flower Show party held at a mansion with a wing for servants, three of the most perfect cows I have ever seen, and extraordinary food (including saffron ice cream!) I expect never to taste again. All of the party's delicacies—at least 30 different



**TOP:** Miniature-flowered marigolds (*Tagetes tenuifolia*) grown for Flower-Show display.

**BOTTOM:** Palms for judging.

**INSET:** Plants arriving for the Flower Show.

Sand on the floor of the trucks prevents the clay pots from sliding during travel.

dishes—were prepared right there in front of us, with every item served on a separate china plate.

## The Flower Show Site

The morning before judging the Flower Show, we stopped in at the Agri-Horticultural Society's offices to be introduced to Kees Sahin's friends. During our visit, we actually saw the 185-year history of the event, as initially documented in a journal written by the first secretary of the Society, then continued, handwritten in script, in large, 2-inch thick, ledger-size books, and in English (as the show was started during the Raj, the English colonial period in India). We wandered about the Society's garden that morning, primarily admiring useful plants—tropical fruits and hardwoods—and some purely ornamental plants, vines, orchids, ferns and palms. There were also curiosities, such as the baobab (*Adansonia digitata*) and the elephant foot tree (*Pentace* species), some bizarre euphorbias, and a tree with no two leaves the same shape (*Pterygota alata* 'Diversifolia').

Next on the agenda was a look at the Flower Show site—a grassy, flat field with flat-topped, open, covered structures for the cactus and succulents; an opaque, poly-house set up for cut flowers and children's arrangements; a rather ornate shade house, covered with bright, Kelly-green netting, for the display of orchids and ferns; and a square pavilion set up in the middle of the field to display about 10 elaborate floral arrangements, quite similar to those at Chelsea. Three sides of the field were bordered by green and white plastic fencing, about 15 feet tall—a very odd backdrop for dahlias and other potted, large-scale annuals. White cloth-covered tables were set up for bonsai of extremely high quality, created from tropical and sub-tropical trees and shrubs, ranging from *Ficus* to tamarind.



## Judging

We judges gathered the next day at 9 a.m. at the judge's platform—a tent with no walls, but a veritable living room with couches and end tables for us to use while being instructed and taking breaks.

Each of us was placed with one or two local judges and given one or two show sections to judge. Alice Doyle had annuals, individual and grouped. Derry Watkins was assigned to displays of annuals and a category that included what we call hardy annuals—those that might over-winter in England or in the Pacific Northwest. My categories included vegetables and “herbal medicinal plants.”

The individual vegetable group was most interesting and included some extraordinary entries, all grown in 12-inch pots:

- A big, white, daikon-type radish: with about 8 inches of arm-sized root above soil level; woody with a few cracks on the backside, but with perfect foliage.
- Pumpkin: with rough vines and green fruit.
- Bitter melons (*Momordica charantia*): some warted and green; some, over 2 feet long and black; and some orange and ripe with seeds artfully left on the soil, just as they had fallen.
- Four entries of luffa-type gourd (*Luffa acutangula*)—yes, they are eaten: hanging, as were the bitter melons, from circular trellises in the pots. (One of the local judges I worked with stuck his thumbnail in the skin of a luffa and pronounced, “Not edible quality.”)
- Bean: one small plant with one bunch of beans.

We awarded a “First,” “Second” and “Special Mention” in each category. Among the vegetables, our “First” award went to the long, black, bitter melon.

The herb section was more complex. Herbs were potted in groups of four and included some very unusual plants. There were two woody basil I had never seen, and several



**TOP LEFT:** In the Calcutta flower market covered area.

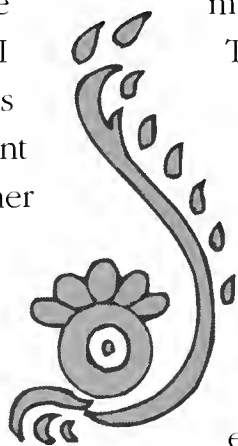
**TOP RIGHT:** Handpicked marigolds being weighed.

**BELOW:** Disbudded dahlias, grown to produce huge flowers, in a Flower Show display.





plants I could not identify at all, but the judges I was with knew even less than I did, which seemed odd. Afterwards, Kees identified the basil. The most unusual plant had long, purple leaves the size of summer savory, and scattered, tripled arrangements of pure white, stiff, sharp thorns. We never figured this one out but did later see it in the wild. There was an *Aloe vera* plant in almost every group and a few other succulent-like plants, but most of the herbs were woody or semi-woody shrubs. Awards in this category went to the groups of plants that were best-balanced and looked best overall.



miniature marigold (*Tagetes tenuifolia*). There was also a pale blue lupine of good form, the two bush basil, a good color form of *Calendula* (similar to 'Coffee & Cream'), and a white, cut-flower *Centaurea* that smells of chocolate. The most striking flowers at the Flower Show were the giant dahlias—a local specialty—and we even met one of the breeders. Some

flowers were almost as large as a soccer balls (regulation size!) on disbudded plants no more than two feet high. Some of these were displayed in triangles, dug into the turf so that arrangements were canted toward the viewers, the triangle's point first; and even these plants were grown in 12-inch pots!

After judging ended, we went to the Calcutta Botanical Garden to see the world's largest banyan tree, *Ficus benghalensis*—250 years old, covering more than two acres,

### New Plants and New Sites

At the Flower Show, we did find a few plants new to all four of us, including one Alice is trying to find seed for—a bicolor,



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and held up by hundreds of “stilts” formed by aerial roots that reach the ground. The botanical garden was immense, with wide avenues and a collection of mostly large tropical trees and palms. For a small fee our taxi was permitted to drive into the park. There were giant water lily (*Victoria amazonica*) youngsters in many of the canals and ponds in the park.

The last of our horticultural adventures in Calcutta was our visit to the main flower market at the base of the Howrah Bridge, built in 1943. At 2,313 feet, Howrah Bridge is the third-longest cantilever bridge in the world, but no photos are allowed. The most common flowers for sale were individual French marigolds, mostly yellow and orange, loose, or strung as decorations for weddings or religious use. The market was composed of a street crammed with vendors and a covered area packed with stalls. There were

no straight lines, some one-person-wide aisles and truly millions of flowers: marigolds, double and single tuberoses, edible chrysanthemums and annual bachelor buttons. Often these were in large, woven plastic bags, 3 feet square and 3 feet deep. The bees on the tuberoses were a bit scary but very preoccupied. Ten kilos of French marigolds of mixed color sold for about \$1.20—the same as for a 39-stem bundle of lotus flowers in tight bud.

Although we went on to Darjeeling and Gangtok, the Capital of Sikkim, after our stay in Calcutta, our first experiences in India remain colorfully memorable. ∞

**BOB LILLY** is a former board member of the Arboretum Foundation, chair of its spring plant sale, FlorAbundance, and co-chair of its Fall Bulb & Plant Sale.

## Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

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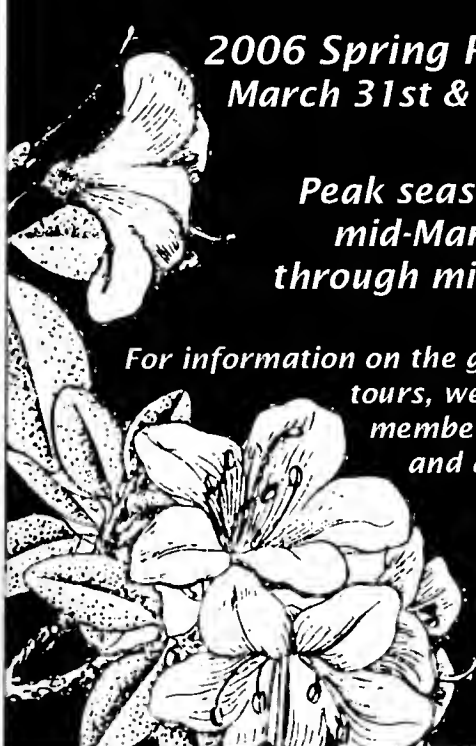
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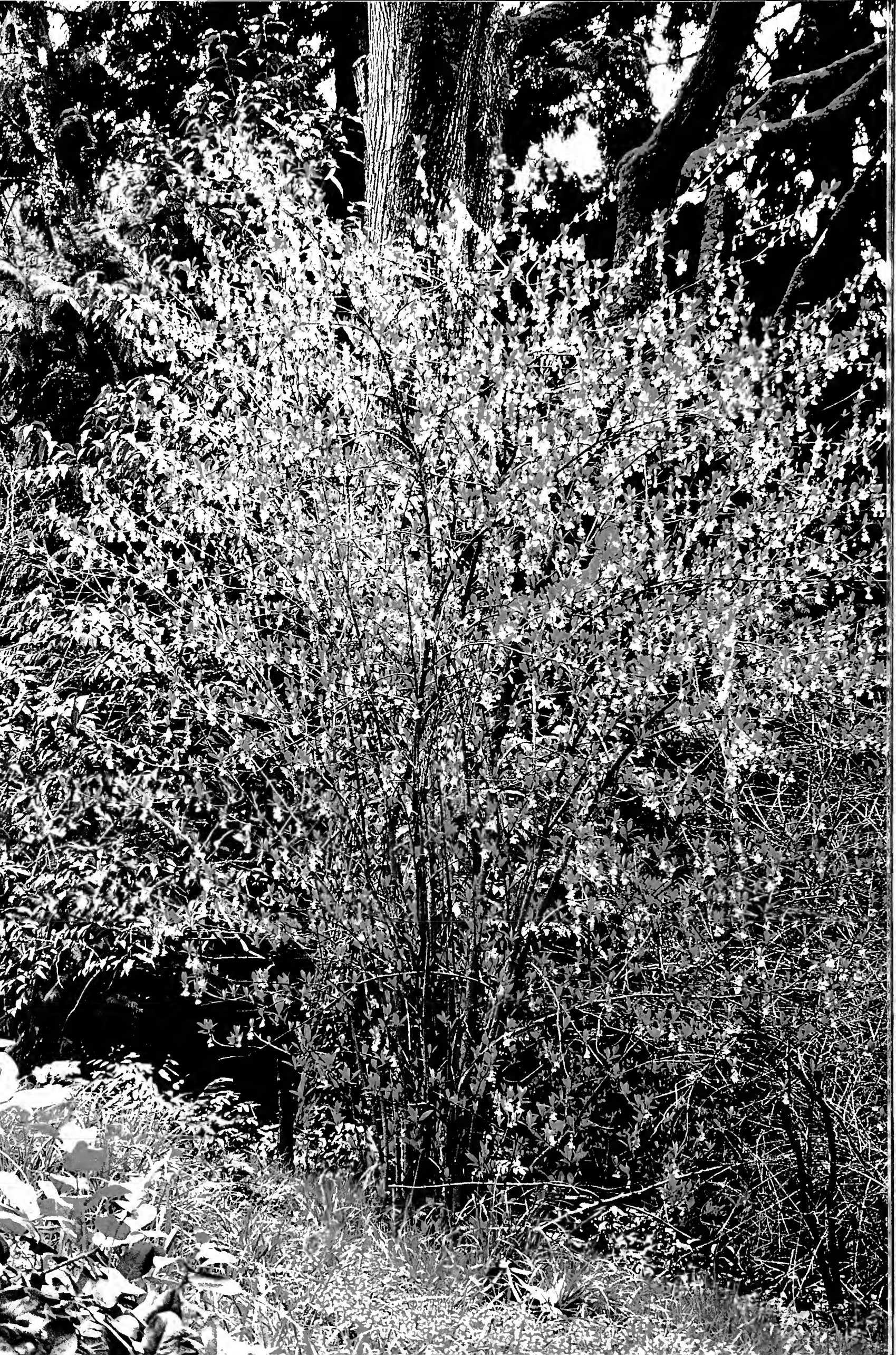
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## Indian Plum: *Oemleria cerasiformis*

BY WALT BUBELIS

Do you ever lust after the latest plant from England, the one you've just seen in a new, glossy publication? Well, how about using a homegrown plant that many English gardeners covet? It is none other than our native harbinger of spring, the Indian plum.

So common here we've taken to treating them like red alders—ubiquitous weeds—



removing them when in the way, ignoring them until they are no longer in our gardens, Indian plums are now usually found only in the distant woods. But English gardeners know a good thing, even if we don't. They import seed of Indian plum, just to grow what we've been eradicating from our native landscape.

Why? What do they see in Indian plum? A plant with the fresh green of new grass; white

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**OPPOSITE:** This specimen Indian plum (*Oemleria cerasiformis*) is easy to identify by its new, grass-green leaves and early, white flowers. **ABOVE:** Racemes of dangling blossoms lure admirers with subtle almond fragrance. **INSET:** Mr. Parker, the author's cat, admires this specimen's cinnamon-colored bark. (Photo by Walt Bubelis) Native from British Columbia south to northern California, Indian plum may be seen throughout the Arboretum.

flowers that greet the late winter sun; leaves that, when crushed, smell of cucumbers; a plant that settles down in either sun or shade.

Indian plum resonates, for me, with the changing of the seasons. Like many of our Eastern forest representatives, Indian plum comes out well before the canopy of maples and alders shuts the forest floor with its ever-thickening foliage. It starts the spring phenology sometime in late winter; once its flowers are evident, one feels that spring cannot be far behind.

Even a single specimen easily can be identified at this critical time. The white flowers hang down in short groups known as racemes. The plant is dioecious, with the sexes on separate plants. (*Dioecious* means "two houses" or "two worlds." The root *oikos*, or "our world," is also found in *ecos* and *ecology*.) Looking closely, one can determine the plant's sex. Both male and female flowers are lovely, but only females will produce some of the bitterest fruits around. The small, purplish fruit is, indeed, like its plum relatives, a stone fruit, but the very thinnest coating of pulp covers the elliptic stone inside. Only once have I ever tasted fruits that were palatable and not just bitter. Not to worry; they are attractive to squirrels and birds, regardless, and one finds animal-borne seedlings popping up some distance from the parent. Youngsters (and even older specimens) are easy to transplant, if moved during the early winter.

Indian plum was once known as *Osmaronia*, a more euphonious name than the current *Oemleria*, which honors one Herr Oemler of Dresden, who happened to be a friend of several early naturalists and botanists, such as Thomas Nuttall, whose name graces *Cornus nuttallii*, the Pacific dogwood. There is only the single species, *O. cerasiformis*, the specific epithet referring to its cherry-like fruit.

Before being named *Oemleria*, this plant was once known as *Nuttallia cerasiformis*, named for the very same friend of Oemler, Thomas Nuttall. Although related to plums,

*Oemleria* earns its own genus for the botanical characteristic of having five pistils, each free of the others. Plums (*Prunus* species) have but one pistil.

### ***Striking Seasonal Harbinger***

Admittedly, this native is rather poor in fall color—yellow leaves appearing amidst still-green foliage and sometimes dropping rather quickly if subjected to a dry season. However, early leaf drop signals, to me, the upcoming autumn, when increasing light reappears in the woodland, as the deciduous canopy once again reveals its structure. I notice winter passing, when the slender buds of Indian plum start to swell, then fatten, as the compressed parts imbibe water from the roots.

Then, one day, there they are—the first flowers! Pendent and white, whether male or female, and brilliant, whether seen on an overcast day or in sunshine. A few tentative flowers appear at first; then the early, brave ones are joined by myriad blossoms. Close up, they smell of almond. The woods are alive with these flashes of white. Leaves begin to show ever more of their beautiful, grass-green coloration. One knows good weather is coming soon; winter is losing its grip.

Eventually the whole plant is fully green, demanding little attention until the dark bluish-black fruits begin to appear in late spring. I wisely wait to try them until they look fully black and swollen, and, if lucky, I may get a sweet-tasting one.

### ***Cinnamon Sticks***

As summer progresses, I notice the warm brown bark more and more. Possibly as a reaction to sunlight, older plants start developing cinnamon-colored bark, as worthy of respect as that found on *Stewartia* trunks. In an older specimen, this feature is an added attraction to look for and foster—foster, because you may have to discourage suckers at the base that, if left on the plant,

would obscure the oldest, thickest trunks.

Left to its own devices, Indian plum takes on a multi-trunked habit. If in the open, it will grow equally wide as tall, usually 10 to 15 feet in both dimensions. If in a woodland setting, it will stretch for light and become a tall, narrow tree. I have come across some venerable examples up to 25 feet tall. They appreciate moist, rich soil, such as that created over time by fallen deciduous leaves.

### ***Both Useful and Pleasurable***

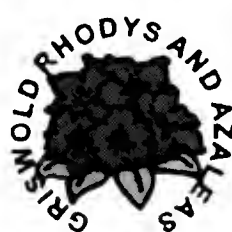
Some native Salish made use of this plant, eating fresh fruits in small quantities as well as cooking and drying them. Twigs were also chewed, and the sap applied to sores. Sometimes twigs were burned and mixed with fish oil before application. The Saanich of Vancouver Island made a bark tea as a purgative and tonic.

Indian plum is also called oso berry and Oregon plum. The reference to oso puzzles me. Oso, in Spanish, means "bear." The small town of Oso in Western Washington, east of Everett, supposedly was named by a visiting Spanish speaker who observed a bear at the site. (See the Oso website for this and other colorful observations.) Now, does oso berry mean "bear berry," the same common epithet given to *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*, otherwise known as kinnickinnick? Oregon plum makes some sense for state-booster-type botanists. One is reminded of how common names change, depending upon locale. In California, *Umbellularia californica* is known as California bay, and in Oregon, as Oregon myrtle.

All in all, *Oemleria cerasiformis* brings life to early woodland scenes and serves as a source of food for wildlife and pleasure to those who stop to enjoy the close-up details that this quiet native provides. ♪

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**WALT BUBELIS** has taught horticulture at Edmonds Community College for 37 years.



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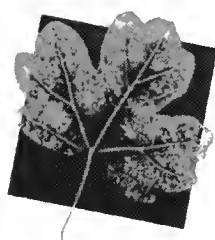
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# A Designer's Introduction to

## AROUND THE GARDEN IN ONE THOUSAND AND ONE QUESTIONS:

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY  
IAIN M. ROBERTSON

**S**urely, Washington Park Arboretum's Japanese Garden is Seattle's most overlooked treasure. Although my original goal in writing this piece was to suggest questions that garden guides might pose to visitors, to enrich their experience of this sublime garden, these questions may also prove helpful to individuals strolling the garden without a guide. To avoid any suggestion that these observations are a prescription for the "right" way to experience or understand the garden, Japanese illustrations, rather than photographs, have been chosen to accompany





**FAR LEFT:** Every entrance should re-entrance.  
(Garden of Ryoan-ji, Kyoto, Japan)

**LEFT:** Curving paths conceal and reveal destinations, playing off the open space against the building.

**BELOW:** The Pond Revealed: One step at a time, the sequence unfolds. The picture emerges.  
(Katsura garden, Kyoto, Japan.)

## o Seattle's Japanese Garden



# A Designer's Introduction to Seattle's Japanese Garden

the questions. So try to imagine yourself strolling counterclockwise around the garden while looking at these images and pondering these questions.

## Preparing to Stroll the Garden

Seattle's Japanese Garden was designed as a stroll garden by Mr. Jukio Iida, and a stroll, with its accompanying sequence of events, translates easily into a narrative, prompting questions: What stories unfold as one strolls Seattle's Japanese Garden? How does the design orchestrate or compose sequential narratives? Do stories change if we follow different routes or visit the garden at different seasons?

Japanese gardens are replete with symbolic meanings, and the perceptual rule, "the more one knows, the more one sees," applies par excellence to them. Posing questions about narrative interpretations before crossing the threshold may encourage visitors to see not only what's there—the garden's plants, stones, lanterns, water, structures, etc.—but also what's NOT there—allusions to mountains, forests, rivers and villages. Although a guide's job is not to instruct visitors about what and how to see and think at every step of the way, it is desirable to open visitors' eyes to physical, perceptual and symbolic experiences. Artfully timed questions may enhance the experience of the garden's literal narrative lines and facilitate reading between these lines, too.

Preparatory questions may also throttle back the turbocharged American mentality to a pace suitable for our journey. Think of the garden's entry as wrapping paper. What's inside? How are the contents presented and implied? The gate's modest scale, rustic materials and fine craftsmanship hint at the garden's character and values. The gate frames a view of a path that slides tantalizingly around

shrub masses, discreetly inviting us into the garden, while simultaneously saying slow down! Pay attention! Like a face glancingly hidden by a fan, this partial view suggests a game of allure—revealing and concealing—that is repeated throughout the garden.

## The Curving Path

Rounding the first bend, we are immersed in the garden and fall under the path's influence. How are the shrub masses, tree canopies and open spaces shaped to interact with the path? How do they encourage our eye—and attention—to look from side to side, rather than retain a straight-ahead, goal-fixed gaze? What happens to the experience when the eye is enticed off the beaten path? We begin to suspect that the journey IS the purpose! (If visitors ask, "When will we get there?" we are tempted to reply, "You can't get there with that attitude!") In this portion of the tour, before we have our first glimpse of the pond, we might consider how our speed of travel is influenced by the path's bending, widening and narrowing, and by the location, character and variety of objects along the way.

The first major intersection occurs at the bridge and presents us with a choice of routes. Suddenly, the garden is more than a singular narrative. How do we choose which path to follow? Does the design subtly or overtly favor one direction over the other? Is our choice influenced by what we can and cannot see? Again, images of fans and veils come to mind. Suggesting one route, the foreground stream draws our eye through plant masses to a view of a corner of the teahouse roof. A tantalizing hint of open space suggests another way. Choosing between alternatives slows us down and encourages closer observation of our surroundings. Part of the richness of the garden derives from observations at the larger landscape



Complexity slows us down, to observe, to become engaged.  
(The dry landscape garden of Taizo-in, Kyoto, Japan.)

scale, and part from observations at the intimate scale, where detail, intricacy, variety and change reward attentive viewers and remind us to enjoy every step of the journey. Selecting the right-hand path, we postpone visiting the teahouse. How is the garden experience affected by deferring this reward?

## The Pond Revealed

The garden's main feature, the pond, is gradually revealed, one-glimpse-at-a-time, until we come alongside it and feel its expansiveness in contrast to the constricted spaces we have traversed. How does the experience of the pond differ when we look along its length, rather than across its narrower breadth? Is the experience enriched by the sequence of framed views, rather than a continuous open view? How might our responses to these questions influence how we choose to experience Seattle's panoramic mountain, water, landscape or cityscape views?

The shrubs and pine trees along the pond's length create a sequence of views that change the focus of our attention—the teahouse,

the peninsula and lantern, the orchard and viewing platform, and the bridge. In this way, the small pond is made to seem larger. Elements that might compete, if arrayed cheek-by-jowl, instead form a complementary, contrasting sequence. Masses and views are part of our narrative's spatial grammar. The number of different views of the pond we experience during our garden walk is surprisingly large, but they are artfully knit together into a coherent, unified whole. Some of the plants surrounding the pond are pruned into dense masses, while others, such as the pines, have open, sculptural forms. What is the difference between looking at a view

framed by solid masses and looking through lacy branches and twigs at the water beyond? Our responses to this question make us aware of the richness of human perception and the eye's ability to change focus from the close to the distant—to focus on the screen itself or to see through and beyond to the view.

The "push and pull" of plant masses and space continues around the pond. Some shrub masses tend to nudge our bodies—and attention—away from the perimeter fence into the garden's center. Contrast this treatment of the garden's boundaries with sentinel rows of *Thuja pyramidalis* along other property lines, insistently drawing our attention to those boundaries rather than concealing their presence. Using the well-known technique of "borrowed scenery," the fence is intermittently screened, so the garden can connect visually to the further hillside. Reaching the Emperor Gate, we face another delightful decision: to continue around the pond or to cross the bridge. Why is the path wider at this decision point? How does this widening encourage us to slow down and ponder our choices? A quick detour to the bridge proves irresistible.



## A Designer's Introduction to Seattle's Japanese Garden



### Increasing Complexity

The path to the bridge is far more complex than the main path: it narrows significantly, and shrubs press in upon it insistently; stepping stones appear, followed by steps up to the bridge; materials change; sharp angles are introduced; and boundaries between land and

water diminish. In myriad ways our perceptions and movements are being manipulated. "What is going on here?" We are being slowed down. Our attention is directed first in one direction, then another—any direction except straight across the bridge. Where the bridge widens, we are encouraged to stop and observe. It should come as no surprise that the garden's richest detailing is located here, in its heart: pines and perimeter stones, low railings, turtles and koi. Here, too, are some of the garden's

most delightful expansive views, for this low viewpoint and central location minimize the fence's obtrusiveness and include the surrounding wooded hillsides in an undivided scene. This is not the result of chance.

Returning to the perimeter path beyond the Emperor Gate, we confront some of the garden's most difficult design problems. After bending past an elegantly sparse weeping willow, we cross the pond where it flows out of the garden. How is this done? Is the transition elegant and natural, or awkwardly contrived? Here, traffic noise is most intrusive. Does the sound of water compensate? Stepping-stones and the wisteria arbor viewpoint counter undesirable distractions and draw our attention back into the garden. Is the design successful? Could it be modified to work better?



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**TOP:** Complexity, not perplexity—diversity contained within a larger unity. (Shoren-in garden pond, Kyoto, Japan.) **BOTTOM:** Children *in* the garden, not *at* the garden—active participants, not passive observers. (Taizo-in, Kyoto, Japan.)



This corner is one of the most complex places in the garden. We may choose the steep path to a viewpoint down the length of the valley or follow the rectangular steppingstones across the terrace between the pond and retaining wall. The contrast between the rectilinear terrace and other parts of the garden provokes questions. Crossing the terrace, why do we step on the stones and not on the grass? How does this choice influence our experience? How does the massive retaining wall affect sensibilities refined by intimate and delicate features? Does the geometry evoke the intended feeling of human habitation? Foremost among these questions is the conundrum of the garden's missing building—a pavilion located on top of the wall and intended to be

the garden's main feature and focal point. Here, we may imagine the garden completed. How different would it look seen from a pavilion? Might we feel like a feudal Japanese lord surveying his stroll garden? Do we now see the garden differently—as an unfinished symphony? Will the last page of Seattle's Japanese Garden narrative remain unwritten?

At this prospect, we stand above the garden's boundaries and survey its context. Does it successfully nestle into the Arboretum valley, blurring its boundaries as it "borrows" views of enclosing hillsides? This thought leads to other contextual thoughts: To what extent is Seattle's garden rooted in Japanese cultural history, and to what extent does it derive its form and character from the Northwest soil in

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Intricacy and intimacy in the larger composition and detail.  
"Bigness" contains. "Smallness" creates intimacy.  
(A shady garden at Ryoan-ji, Kyoto, Japan.)

# A Designer's Introduction to Seattle's Japanese Garden

which it is rooted? What feels Japanese? What feels Northwest? Have we traveled, in imagination, across the Pacific to Japan and back in time to the Muromachi period?

## Coherence & Complexity

But the return journey—in particular, the teahouse—beckons. Do we have time to sit in the Azumaya and ponder universal design questions? How does this tapestry of land, water, plants and buildings comprise a unified composition, while composed of separate, distinct parts? What gives the garden its harmony and coherence, and how does this order aid our comprehension? How do the garden's variety, interest and surprise continually engage our attention without destroying the coherence of the unfolding narrative? Easy answers elude us, but departing visitors may ponder the success of the delicate balance between conceptual coherence—necessary to avoid the perception of chaos—and the variety and richness that prevent boredom. From the Azumaya, the path meanders through the orchard's punctuated space, where low-canopied trees contrast markedly with looser, naturalistic spaces.

## The Garden's Heart

The orchard leads to the wooden viewing deck that extends into the pond, where we engage it intimately. Bounded by water, the deck provides a new experience, different from that offered by the perimeter paths or bridge. Its geometric shape prompts questions about the shapes of land and water. How are we affected by the form of the pond's edge? The promontory beach jutting into the water? The growth of plants into or over the water, veiling the land and water boundary? Deck views are among the most varied in the garden,

prompting questions about ways in which its design connects us to or separates us from the garden. The deck is also a good place to ask: Where is the heart of the garden?—a question likely to provoke a lively conversation. Perhaps the deck is the heart. Perhaps the teahouse, or possibly the pond itself. What qualities should a garden's "heart" possess? Since the question is metaphorical, should we even be concerned about locating the garden's heart? This question reminds us that much of the garden experience, like the location of the heart, is symbolic.

## Enfolding Intricacy

Time presses, and we move on past lovely iris and water lilies to the path's last major intersection, where we must choose between a narrow path skirting the water's edge and the teahouse hedge, or a wider route between the teahouse garden and perimeter fence. The former path traverses the loveliest and most intimate parts of the garden, and our mind, eyes and feet concur—this is the route to follow. Intricacies and intimacies abound along this enchanted section—enough beauty to still even a designer's chattering, questioning mind. Who could not be delighted by the enclosed, still pool where the stream enters the pond? Japanese maples hang low over the water, the waterfall sounds distantly, and our feet are lured into greater intimacies by steppingstones. Here shrubs and the "mountain" press in, enfolding us within the garden. Here the canopy contains us delicately, perhaps reminding us how open and expansive the pond is in contrast to this still containment. Here is intricacy, complexity and richness. Here one might voice, *soto voce*, the unanswerable question: Why is it so beautiful?

We have bypassed the teahouse in its enclosed garden. This delicate and mysterious



Farewells offer thoughts of returning as well as the beginning of memories. (Ryoan-ji, Kyoto, Japan.)

building may be observed from all sides but remains at arm's length—inaccessible and unapproachable. If we enter its sanctum sanctorum, we find ourselves matching, with infinite care, each footstep to each stepping-stone. The teahouse is replete with questions—a privileged space within a privileged garden, and the subject for another visit, another narrative.

## Parting Gifts

Crossing the huge, rounded steppingstones by the waterfall brings us closer to the end of our journey. The waterfall's splash prompts us to consider the contribution of sound to the garden experience. Boulevard traffic notwithstanding, much of the garden is shrouded in silence. Our attentiveness has been heightened, and we hear the water with greater appreciation and clarity. What are the sounds and silences of the garden? Do we carry them home with us?

Leaving the stream, do our questions finally run dry? No, for the mossy forest floor evokes questions about texture, pattern and contrast.

The texture of fine moss, carpeting the garden's "forest," contrasts dramatically with robust sword ferns, candelabra *Primula* and large-leaved rhododendrons. Here, among these lovely flowers, we notice that our garden experience has, for the most part, ignored flowers—the features that define most gardens. Have we missed them? Does the varied experience of the Japanese garden's study in green delight us? How green, but never tiresome, our world can be!

But return at other seasons, and the garden's emphasis shifts as the color palette changes! Where spring and early summer bask in the splendors of rhododendrons, iris and water lilies,

Japanese maples throw restraint to the wind in the fall. Color variations put us in mind of seasonal changes, which translate into thoughts about time itself. As our visit concludes, we realize that, ultimately, the garden story is about taking time—to look, to feel, to think. Rounding the bend, passing the infinitely delicate, pendulous, cut-leaf maple, we walk through the gate, our minds full of questions and answers—and, I hope, a desire to return to the garden to look deeper, to feel more, and perhaps to ask yet more questions. ∞

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**IAIN M. ROBERTSON** is an Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Adjunct Professor in the College of Forest Resources (University of Washington Botanic Gardens). He serves on the Japanese Garden Advisory Council and is currently working with Seattle Parks Department and University of Washington Botanic Gardens staff on a design for the relocation of the Arboretum holly collection—another narrative! He may be reached at [iainmr@u.washington.edu](mailto:iainmr@u.washington.edu)





# Perennial Maintenance for Beginners

BY CASS TURNBULL

DRAWINGS BY KATE ALLEN

I'm certainly no expert on perennials. About the time I was going to sign up for the perennials class at horticulture school, I started PlantAmnesty and was dragged into trees instead. Nevertheless, as a working maintenance gardener, I've spent several years knocking around in other people's perennial beds, or more accurately in their "mixed borders." (In addition to perennials, mixed borders contain shrubs, sub-shrubs, self-seeding annuals, silk flowers, lounging cats, gazing globes and anything else that might make things look better for a longer period of time.) Last year I took on a naïve client who had just acquired a new home and garden, and I realized I

could act as a coach to the very new. So, even though I don't consider myself an expert in gardening, or pruning for that matter, I may be a specialist in helping people who are new to the subject. Yeah, that's it. I'm a perpetual beginner put on earth to explain to the neophyte that which is obvious to the initiated.

## What Is a Perennial?

First of all, how about a definition of "perennial"? I remember asking my mentor this question and getting a little lecture on the life cycles of perennials and annuals. What I really needed to know was that you buy



The well-clad "perennial tender" makes good use of Cass Turnbull's line of "garden wear," including camouflagé-colored plant tie and a quiver for bamboo poles, adjustable stakes and hoops.

The perennial tender's tool belt includes places for a tiny hammer, wire cutters, zip tie, a hand pruner and a water bottle.

annuals (things like petunias, marigolds and impatiens) in the nursery in spring, and you plant them in the ground or in pots, where they grow up in a month and bloom their heads off continually until frost, when you yank them out and throw them away. Planting your first pot of annuals is very gratifying and causes many people to get hooked on gardening.

Perennials, on the other hand, get planted and live in their beds forever, dying back to ground in the winter and returning in the spring. But they usually bloom for a short period of time—short meaning a month or two. The number of satisfactory flowering annuals seems pretty limited, but the number

of perennials is almost infinite, making perennial bed gardening more "challenging" (a term, all gardeners know, that is code for "difficult and rewarding").

## Maintaining Perennial Beds

First, you need to know that when you see that magazine photo or visit that garden—all glorious in its abundance of foliage and flowers—you are seeing it at its peak. For half of the year—winter—it's mostly gone! And behind the scenes is an incredible amount of work—staking, grooming, relocating, staking, dividing, weeding, baiting, grooming, cutting-back and staking. Did I mention staking? But making and tending perennial beds is, after all, a horticultural addiction of the highest order.

And if you visit that same garden three years later, you will see something wholly different. I often tell people that making a garden is more like riding a horse than building a table. Gardens keep moving and changing as the plants grow up. It's an ongoing process, not something to be finished. Beds get larger, some plants get shaded out, and the garden must be weeded, mulched and adjusted regularly. Perennial bed maintenance is more like riding wild horses at night—standing up, without saddles, while they jump fences and streams.

The old saying for perennials is, "The first year they sleep, the second year they creep and the third year they leap." What they don't tell you is that "the fourth year they leap, and the fifth year they leap, and the sixth..." They crowd their neighbors, shade out rhodies and conifers, and show up in the crowns of other plants or in other areas of the yard. (I've often thought someone should develop a sort of "Richter scale" for perennials, assigning a number to their relative aggressiveness in growth and inability to be controlled or removed.) Or, alternatively, perennials may die a slow, sickly

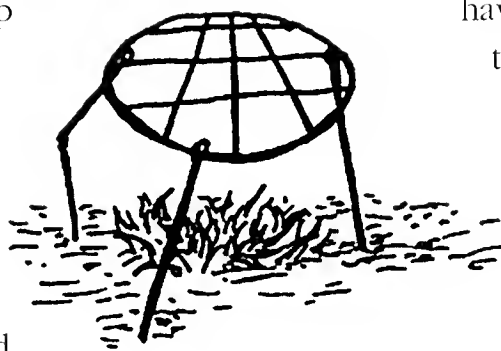
death. Some perennials develop holes in the center of their crowns, and some stop blooming unless you divide them. Many are slug magnets. Some have to be deadheaded, and some get mildew. Did I mention staking? Perennials need a lot of attention, generally speaking.

The good news is that most perennials are really tough. They are, in fact, the masochists of the plant world. Most want to be dug up and torn apart. They like it. You can walk all over them if you like.

## Grooming

Perennials are just like people. They look great with practically no care in the spring-time of their life, but as time goes on, they require more and more care just to look good. Usually, by summer, and certainly by the fall, you will be spending a lot of time “grooming.” This is not as delicate an operation as it sounds. You might use your hedge shears to shear off the spent, brown flowers, or you might shear or cut some moth-eaten, browned-out plant to the ground, to be rewarded with a flush of bright, new, green growth and sometimes a second flowering.

When a plant starts looking tacky, just go inside it and start tugging on yellowing foliage, picking at brown stuff, raking it with your fingers. You’ll be surprised how much better it looks. It’s really quite gratifying. When daylilies start to lose it, I’m in there gleefully yanking on the lower foliage, tossing heaps of leaves out on the lawn. And when they get really bad, they get sawn to the ground with a bread knife! Next month, up comes a new set of foliage. The same is true with browned lady’s mantle; leaf-mined, dusty columbines; ragged hardy geraniums and many others. In fact, whenever a perennial starts to brown out, including perennial bulbs, go at it with gusto. You don’t



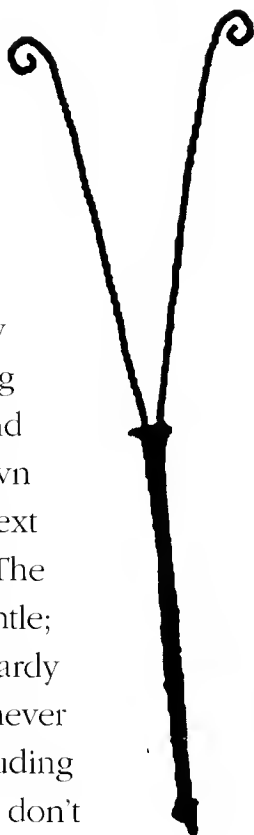
have to wait until the foliage is totally spent. They’ll be fine.

Unfortunately, there are some exceptions to the “cut-it-back-at-will” rule. I wish these were listed somewhere too. So far, all I have is a mental list of the plants that, in my experience, want to be treated gently. By “gently,” I mean they need some special care when being transplanted, cut back or mulched—plants, such as peonies, Oriental and Asiatic lilies, some grasses, hellebores, epimediums, some euphorbias, penstemons, poppies, artemisias and delphiniums. I am hoping you will write to me with more, but only if your knowledge is taken from your personal experience and not from what you’ve read. I am certain that the list of “special needs” perennials is—relative to the total number of those used in the garden—a small one.

Books always recommend that you wait ‘til fall or winter or spring to divide and move your perennials. But by then you will have no idea what was wrong with the way things were, or where, exactly, the plants are. And it will be rainy and cold, and you will want to be inside doing other things. I like to move plants around while they are in bloom, so I can see how they look. Duh! I tend to scoff at all the correct “timing” advice I hear, until I kill something, that is. Remember, if you are not killing a few plants every year, you’re not learning and growing as a gardener.

## Dividing

The same is true for all that dividing of plants that you are supposed to be doing. Is it really necessary? And does dividing really help your daylily bloom? Or keep your “*Sedum spectabile* Autumn Hoorah” from flopping? Maybe, maybe not. Mostly, I find myself dividing plants



because they are getting way too huge. What I can tell you for certain is that dividing is a lot of work. Wraslin' rootballs, that's what it's all about. This past fall, after stabbing with spades—repeatedly and futilely for half an hour—the dug-up rootball of a large ornamental grass, we finally succeeded in using an axe and pry bar to split it apart. We were exhausted. And we put back less than an eighth of what we started with. Oh, and we had divided the same plant the previous year.

The best trick I ever learned from reading a magazine (with illustrations) was how to use two spading forks, adjacent to each other and back-to-back, to pry apart a root mass. After stomping or hammering the tines into the dug-up root mass, one uses the shoulders of the tools as the fulcrum point. Pushing the handles in opposite directions will magically pry the uncooperative plant apart. Wow!

I've only seen "dividing" successfully work to get plants blooming again on a couple of occasions. Once I attempted to remove an entire patch of crocosmia that the homeowner said no longer bloomed. I did what I thought was a thorough job, except that the roots of crocosmia are like a series of pop-beads that separate when you dig them up. And when I had removed 90 percent of the roots, those "corns" that had escaped had plenty of room to grow and bloom, which they did the next year. In fact, I find that some plants are impos-



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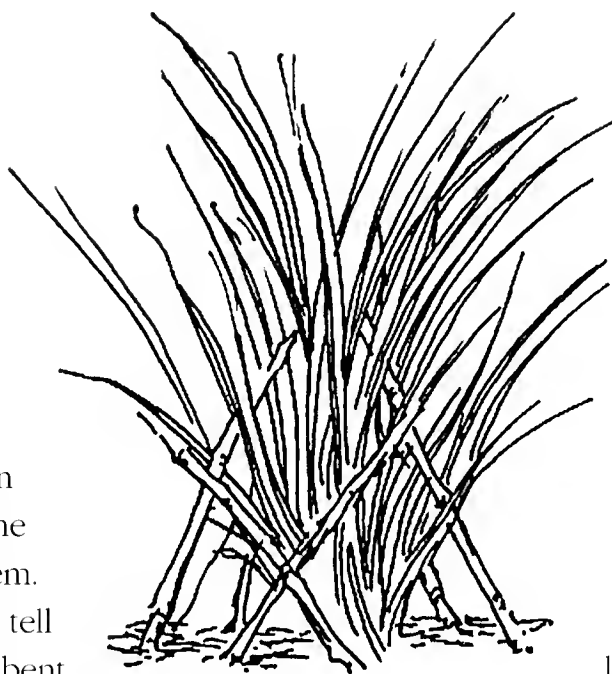
sible to remove. When I try to get rid of them, they come back, and some even increase: arums, alstromerias, scillas, acanthus, calla lilies, and lots more, I imagine. It's kind of scary, when you think about it.

Just because perennials look delicate, doesn't mean they are, and neither is the business of taking care of them. And it's dangerous! I can't tell you how many times I've bent over in a perennial bed to tickle out some covey of shot-weed and narrowly missed poking my eye out on a stake. I'm surprised there aren't more one-eyed gardeners.

## Staking

Staking. It's necessary, and it's a royal pain. I'm of the opinion that well over half of the perennials commonly in use eventually flop. This means that they grow up in the spring, get flowers, and then fall over onto the ground right before the party. There's always a summer rain that flattens perennial beds all over town. When I hear that rain pelt down on a warm June night, I rest smugly knowing that the beds for which I am responsible are supremely prepared. My best advice to you is, "Stake early and stake often."

In February or March at the latest (the same time you are cutting back the sword fern and *Epimedium* foliage), get going with the hoops and cages. You have no idea how fast that clock is ticking. Of greatest need is putting the hoops over the bleeding hearts and, while you are out there, the peonies. By hoops, I mean those egregiously expensive, green, vinyl-clad, glorified tomato cages that have cross-hatching on the top. Place them over the plant early enough that the foliage will grow up and through the caging, hiding



the hoop and preventing the otherwise inevitable and heartbreaking flop in coming months. Peony cages will need to be adjusted upward or added to with more bamboo stakes or t-bars to prevent the taller stems and their heavy blooms from breaking.

Place the hoop over the crown of the newly emerging plant and push the legs down—a little hammer can come in handy to gently tap them in. Soon you will find that one of the wimpy legs bends as it hits a tiny, buried pebble. For aesthetics sake, it may take several re-positionings to get the top level. These same legs will, in a year or two, fall off altogether. I use zip tie and green, coated electrical wire to reattach them. It is time-consuming and annoying, but I have not found better replacements. I daydream a lot about inventing a tasteful, durable, adjustable perennial hoop.

But hoops are only used for certain plants. Large, spreading, mat-type plants and single-stemmers get different treatments. I have long since given up the commonly used system of string tied between several bamboo stakes corraling, say, Shasta daisies or a clump of irises. Instead, I use a "modified, bamboo picket fence." Tying string is way too time-consuming, and the straight-up bamboo stake, as mentioned previously, is a hazard. Instead, I use a series of bamboo stakes, ends cut at a slant, and jab them in at angles. One stake goes this way and the next goes that way, crossing the first in an arrangement that looks like a series of x's. This is done around the perimeter and also randomly inside the plant. As a flower stem starts to flop, it leans up against a helpful stake, or it may even rest inside a v-crotch. I like bamboo; when I am

done, I can cut the top parts off at just the right height, hiding them from view.

This staking is best done as soon as the plant grows up, but it is also great for “remedial staking,” which is an art in itself. Once the perennial has flopped (and it happens to the best of us), the temptation is to stand it back upright and give it a straight in stake and tie. But by then the ends of the stems will have already curved upwards. When you stand that daisy straight up, its flower now faces backwards. Better just to prop the stems up halfway, using bamboo stakes pushed in at a slant. And do it in a series of layers (sort of like how beauticians foil hair). This works especially well for Siberian iris. Understaking at a slant is good for tired lady’s mantles and many other plants.

I have tried metal and plastic stakes, but I always come back to bamboo, even though it is only good for a year or two before it rots. And I have trained myself to hit the nurseries early, early, early, before all the good bamboo is gone. Good bamboo is fat and strong—not those flimsy little sticks that snap at the slightest pressure. I load up with several bags of bamboo for the season.

This leaves the single-stem type plants, like peach-leaf bellflowers, Asiatic and Oriental lilies, and the prima donnas of all perennials—delphiniums. In these cases, a single or double stake is used. If you can tell which way the spire may fall, you can use two bamboo stakes crossed in an “X,” such that the stem rests in the crotch of the crossed stakes. And garden stores now sell “Y-bar” stakes that are quite useful; these are metal stakes with stiff but malleable arms at the top. The pointed stake is stuck in the ground and its “arms” are wrapped around the perennial stem. But, like their peony cage brethren, Y-bars are also subject to bent-leg syndrome. A single bamboo stake, set straight up next to the stem, is perfectly acceptable in these situations.

And be sure to have on hand suitable tie material. Some people prefer jute, or string. I

am perfectly happy with the too-bright-green spools of twist tie that are sold for such purposes. I attach the spool to my tool belt at the beginning of the day and especially like the fact that the spool includes the cutting system. In the future I will be coming out with a line of “garden wear” that includes camouflagé-colored plant tie and a quiver for bamboo poles, adjustable stakes and hoops. The “perennial tender’s” tool belt will have a place for a tiny hammer, wire cutters, zip tie, a hand pruner and a water bottle.

It is the delphinium that presents the greatest challenge to the perennial bed tender. The single stakes must be constantly adjusted upward and retied at regular intervals all along the stem. Almost overnight, it seems, the flower spikes shoot up to well beyond the last tie point. Then rain comes, or even a tiny breeze, that snaps the stems of these, the most wonderful blue flowers in all the world. You wake up to a forest of fallen blooms. Tragic! The smart gardener immediately goes out, cuts them off and brings them indoors for placement in a vase. So call an impromptu luncheon and impress your friends with your extravagant flower arrangement. Whenever you are grooming your perennial beds, remember to cut the floppers and a few others to take indoors.

The annoying chore of staking is only exceeded by the more time-consuming and annoying chore of unstaking at the end of the year. All this stuff has to be disassembled and the dead leaves combed out by the New Year. You can’t just leave it up; it would look like heck. And besides, you have to get in there and weed and mulch everything before it all starts growing again, which is happening sooner every year, or so it seems. ♡

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**CASS TURNBULL** is the founder and spokesperson for PlantAmnesty. She is the author of “Cass Turnbull’s Guide to Pruning” (2nd edition, Sasquatch Press).



# A New Flora— Just in Time for Spring!

BY BRIAN R. THOMPSON

Eugene N. Kozloff has a knack for telling the natural history of our region.

In "Plants and Animals of the Pacific Northwest" (University of Washington Press, 1976), he skillfully introduces the keen amateur to the native flora and fauna west of the Cascade Mountains. Still in print 30 years later, this book has proven appeal for a wide audience. Other Kozloff titles on the biology of Puget Sound and surrounding seashore have achieved similar classic status.

So there was great anticipation amongst plant enthusiasts for "Plants of Western Oregon, Washington & British Columbia," released in late 2005 by Timber Press. Happily, this book does not disappoint.

However, this is not a plants-only narrative in the style of Kozloff's earlier "Plants and Animals." Nor is it a pocket field guide. Instead, after a helpful and extensive introduction, over 400 pages of this hefty book present a series of dichotomous keys, or step-



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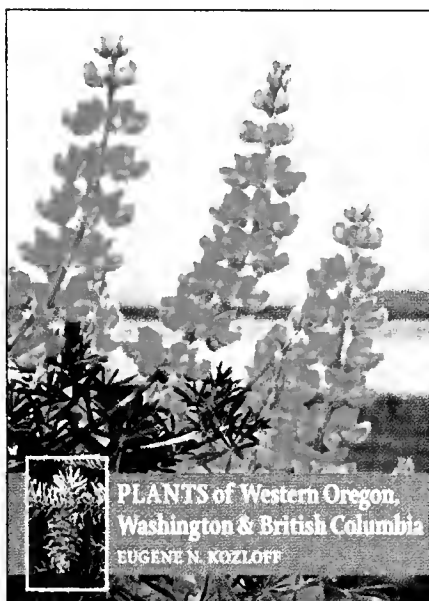
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by-step choices based on either/or descriptions, that lead the reader to the correct identification of a plant in hand. Typically known as “Floras,” these books provide a comprehensive review of nearly all the plants to be found within a defined region.

### Key Features

The keys make this new Kozloff book suitable for those who use the tried and true “Hitchcock,” the field name for the five-volume “Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest,” and its one-volume condensation by C. Leo Hitchcock and others, published between 1955 and 1973 (see sidebar for full citations). It can also be compared to the “Handbook of Northwestern Plants” by Helen



M. Gilkey and La Rea J. Dennis.

Kozloff acknowledges his debt to these earlier works, but there are several differences. First, he restricts this volume to plants growing west of the Cascade mountain range. Second, this Flora contains completely new research, based on Kozloff's studies in the field and on herbarium specimens. Of the 2500 species covered, no more than 50 descriptions are

based on secondary sources.

Additionally, Kozloff's skill at narrative text is used to good effect throughout the keys, particularly when compared to the often cryptic and heavily abbreviated Hitchcock. While you would never read this book from cover-to-cover, browsing finds a wide range of interesting information, including the

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subjects' geographic and habitat preferences, propagation and cultivation requirements, and conservation and invasive plant concerns.

Some 350 line drawings augment the text, many used with permission from Hitchcock. While I wish there were more, the lack is addressed by over 700 good photographs—many taken by the author.

## Audience

At \$65.00, "Plants of Western Oregon, Washington & British Columbia" is not a



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casual purchase. Over 500 pages in hardback, its size and weight restrict field adaptability. But for the student of botany, the native-plant enthusiast, or even gardeners who have a strong interest in our native plant palette, this is a home or laboratory reference work that will remain important for many years.

The introduction itself is worthy of separate publication—especially as a guide to using identification keys, wherever they may appear—and is worth visiting the Elisabeth C. Miller Library or another library to read. Kozloff is a very clear writer and is careful to define his terms, promising "relatively few terms not already in your vocabulary are used here."

Kozloff intentionally keeps the book's range and scope fairly small, including only vascular plants west of the Cascade crest and north of the Oregon-California border through southern British Columbia. The specifics are described in a chapter entitled "Geography and Geology," and notable is the inclusion of the Siskiyou mountain range and its 250-some endemic, serpentine-loving plants—plants that are typically excluded from other comprehensive treatments of Pacific Northwest flora.

The author clearly states his goal to be comprehensive within the region, intending "to include all native plants that a diligent botanist has a reasonable chance of finding." He also includes "well-established weeds" but cautions that this list is constantly changing.

## Other Recent Guides

For fieldwork, or simply walking in the woods while spring wildflowers are peaking, any of several field guides will help with the basics. The best—covering the region also addressed by Kozloff but excluding southwestern Oregon and adding southeastern Alaska—is Pojar and MacKinnon's "Plants of the Pacific Northwest Coast."

This book, published in 1994, with a revised 2004 edition featuring a weather-resis-

tant cover, intersperses photographs, descriptions and habitat of major species with notes on less prominent relatives. Where needed, keys are provided to untangle particularly tricky plant groups, such as the many “yellow daisies” of the sunflower family.

Another comprehensive but not well-known Flora is the recently published “Illustrated Flora of British Columbia,” edited by George W. Douglas and others. In eight volumes, this is even less field-portable, although it combines keys with a descriptive format more typical of a field guide. Published by the British Columbia provincial government, this work, understandably, is fashioned for a wide audience, including land managers and others not primarily focused on the plant life. Nearly every genus is accompanied by a detailed line drawing, and descriptions don’t overwhelm with detail.

### In Summary

While “Plants of Western Oregon, Washington & British Columbia” is a departure from Kozloff’s earlier—but worthy—natural history narratives, his skill as a writer is clear, even in the restricted format of a descriptive Flora. This makes it an important consideration for every plant lover’s library, especially here in the Pacific Northwest. ♪

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**BRIAN R. THOMPSON** is Curator of Horticultural Literature at the Elisabeth C. Miller Library of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens.

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